

Isaac Marx House  
113 Church Street  
(relocated on campus of  
University of South Alabama)  
Mobile  
Mobile County  
Alabama

HABS No. ALA-778

ALA

49-MOBI

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

## ISAAC MARX HOUSE

Location: Originally at 113 Church Street; dismantled and re-erected on the campus of the University of South Alabama, Mobile, Mobile County, Alabama.  
Geographic Location Code: 01-2100-097

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Present Owner: University of South Alabama

Present Occupant: Department of Art

Present Use: Offices, classrooms, meeting rooms

Statement of Significance: This structure is a typical brick town house of nineteenth-century Mobile.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1868
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: The property upon which this house stood was part of two lots owned by George A. Tuthill in the 1840's and 50's. In 1858, the lots were re-divided by a line running north-south, and acquired by different parties. In 1868, Isaac Marx bought the western lot, on the corner of St. Emanuel and Church Streets, and constructed the existing house. The following chain of title was extracted from the deed books of the Probate Court Record Division, Mobile County.

1868 Deed April 14, 1868 in Book 24 pages 107-108  
A.J. Ingersoll  
to  
Isaac Marx  
(\$3,000.)

1872 Deed October 10, 1872 in Book 30 pages 644-645  
Isaac Marx  
to  
Morris Greenhood  
(\$10,000.)

1897 Deed November 15, 1897 in Book 85 page 152  
Helena Greenhood  
to  
Fannie E. Haas

1927 Deed July 13, 1927 in Book 215 page 406  
Toxey D. Haas  
to  
Annie E. Noble

1927 Deed July 13, 1927 in Book 218 page 371  
Annie E. Noble  
to  
Mary B. Nichol

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In 1967, the house was sold to the University of South Alabama, dismantled, and re-erected on the campus.

4. Builder or contractor, suppliers: Unknown, but the cast-iron bears the mark: "P.S. & I."
5. Original plan and construction: Information about the original appearance of the house is contained in the files of the Historic Buildings Inventory.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Lewis Troost Map (c. 1840), City Hall, Mobile

Mobile Deed Books, Probate Court Record Division,  
Mobile County

Historic Buildings Inventory, Mobile City Planning  
Commission Office, City Hall, Mobile  
(Includes oral interview with Mrs. Arthur Bailey,  
daughter of George A. Haas, taken May 17, 1968)

2. Secondary and published sources:

Bird's Eye View of the City of Mobile, Alabama, 1873,  
Cincinnati: Ehrgotte T. Krebs, 1873.

Mobile City Directory, Mobile: Henry Farrow & Co., 1869.

Nineteenth Century Mobile Architecture. An Inventory of  
Existing Buildings, Mobile: Mobile City Planning  
Commission (unpublished manuscript to be published 1972).

Southern and Southwestern Surveying and Publing Company,  
City Atlas of Mobile, Alabama, from Actual Surveys  
and Records, Baltimore: G.M. Hopkins, 1878.

Prepared by Charles A. Herrington  
Architectural Historian  
National Park Service  
August 4, 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

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A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: In both character and detail, this is a typical example of a two-story brick residence with attached rear service wing and a small formal garden on one side. Also typical is the highly ornamental cast-iron veranda on the front.
2. Condition of fabric: The house was in fair condition before it was dismantled and re-erected in 1968.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This is a two-story house with an irregular "L"-shaped plan. The three-bay front measures 29'-0"; the west side steps out 14'-5", and further back, another 9'-8"; the total east-west measurement is thus 53'-1". The over-all depth is 88'-1", including the front veranda and the service wing. Before the house was moved, the wing formed an obtuse angle with the main block, but when it was reconstructed, it was straightened to form a 90° angle.
2. Foundations: The brick foundation walls are continuous under both the exterior walls and interior partitions, and have cast-iron vents.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The brick bearing walls are 18" thick and were painted grey before the house was moved. Before reconstruction, it was determined that the bricks were originally unpainted; thus, the reconstructed walls have exposed brick. The bricks used for the facade are of finer quality and have a more glossy surface than those on the sides, as was the custom in the area during the nineteenth century. The mortar joints on the facade were carefully beaded, while those on the sides were roughly protruding. In the reconstruction, thicker mortar joints and a trowel line were mistakenly employed, thus changing the original appearance of the brickwork.
4. Structural system, framing: There is typical wooden floor and roof framing. The floors of the first floor rest on 2" x 12" joists placed 1'-6" on center. The roof framing is a simple king-post truss with 2" x 8" joists, 1½" x 11" tiebeams, 2" x 6" rafters, and 1" x 10" king-posts.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: On the north front, there is a full ornamental two-story cast-iron veranda with a hipped roof (three pitches only). The front steps are brick with white marble treads, and the floor of the veranda is faced with tan-colored octagonal tiles and bordered with white marble. In the rear ell is a two-story wooden gallery with square posts and balusters. Wooden shutters with lattices above fill most of the bays. Small wooden enclosures occur at the ends of the galleries. At the corner of the ell

is a wooden bulkhead that covers the steps leading down to a low cellar.

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6. Chimneys: There are two brick chimneys symmetrically placed on the east wall, and one on the south wall at the corner of the ell. Another is located in the center of the service wing.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance doorway is set back into the brick wall and consists of a door flanked by vertical panelled posts and single-light sidelights. The soffit and reveals are also panelled. Acanthus console brackets on the posts support the lintel, but the top of the doorway, which is badly out of proportion, has apparently been altered, since a steel lintel has been inserted. A triangular patch in the brickwork above the doorway probably indicates that it originally had a pediment. The single wooden door has six panels: lower squares, circles in the middle, and long vertical round-headed panels at the top. The door sill is a solid 4" x 18" wooden block. The rear doorway at the end of the hall has panelled jambs and soffit, a solid 4" x 18" wooden sill, and a flat brick arch at the head. An eighteen-light door is modern, but traces of hinges on the outer face of the jambs indicate that there were originally either double doors, or possibly shutters. Other rear doors leading to the gallery on both floors have plain mouldings and are four-panelled. The doors were originally unstained cypress and have been returned to that state in the restoration.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Floor-length windows on the north front are double-hung wooden sash with six-over-nine lights (12" x 19" top; 12" x 22" bottom). East and west side windows are double-hung wooden sash with six-over-six lights, except one floor-length window on the east side, which resembles those on the north front. The service wing windows are also double-hung wooden sash with six-over-six lights. All windows were originally provided with louvered wooden shutters, painted green. In the restoration, those on the north front were replaced. Window sills are wooden and the heads are flat brick arches, some of which had plastered lintels simulating stone. In the restoration, the arches were left exposed.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: There are two intersecting hipped roofs over the main section, covered with thin slate shingles, and a hipped roof over the service wing, covered with composition roll roofing.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Two rows of slightly projecting bricks form an architrave, above which is a plain frieze with

cast-brick modillions (acanthus) supporting narrow overhanging eaves with panelled soffits. The service wing is treated similarly, but has no modillions. All exterior trim, including the cast-iron, was originally painted white, and has been restored to that color.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None

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C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The plan of the main section is "L"-shaped with a full-length hall on the west side, a double parlor on the east, and a single room where the rear portion of the west side steps out. On the second floor, the plan is basically the same, except that the two rooms over the parlors are separated by a band of closets, and there is a small room at the north end of the hall. The service wing consists of four rooms in a line on both floors.
2. Stairways: There is a single-flight stairway on the west wall with an octagonal newel, turned balusters, and twenty-three risers, beginning at the front of the hall. In addition, there is a single-flight stairway on the rear gallery.
3. Flooring: Flooring throughout is random-width pine boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings are plastered and some of the walls were covered by an imported French wall-paper that had a vague floral pattern against a "bronzey" background.
5. Doorways and doors: All interior doors are wooden and have four panels.
6. Special decorative features, trim: All doors and windows of the main section have architrave trim. Those on the first floor are eared at the top and have batters which extend down to the base moulding, whether or not the windows are full-length. For the windows that are not full-length, a panel is placed in the space between the window and base moulding, which is 12" high throughout. On the first floor, a simulated cove is created by drawn plaster wall and ceiling mouldings above a gilt wood picture mould. Separating the parlors is a plaster arch springing from floral plaster brackets. The faces of the arch are decorated with a plaster Greek fret meander with gilt in the fret. The ceilings of the first-story rooms also have plaster medallions of an acanthus pattern. The base mouldings on the second floor are unusual in that the individual mould members are returned to the floor at the doorways, creating a panel-like effect. There is also 3'-1" panelled wainscoting in the west room on the first floor.
7. Notable hardware: None

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8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: All three fireplaces on the first floor of the main section have simple white marble mantlepieces and cast-iron grates. Those on the second floor and in the service wing have simple wooden mantlepieces and cast-iron grates.
- b. Lighting: There were originally gas fixtures, but electric lighting was installed early in the twentieth century and most of the old fixtures were removed.
- c. Plumbing: In the attic, there was a large wooden water tank, tarred and caulked, that collected water from the roof and piped it into the west room on the second floor.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Before it was dismantled, the house was located on the southeast corner of Church and St. Emanuel Streets, facing north. It was reconstructed on the campus of the University of South Alabama.
2. Landscaping: The north front and west side yards were enclosed by an ornamental cast-iron fence set on a 10" high brick curb. The cast-iron has the same pattern as that of the front veranda and was thus probably included in the original design for the house. There were remnants of a formal garden in the west yard. The fence was moved and reconstructed with the house and is painted white, which was probably the original color.
3. Outbuildings: At the original location, there was a modern frame and pipe column shed on the southeast corner of the rear yard at the intersection of masonry walls on the property lines. Fragments of brick gate posts at the end of the service wing indicate the possible existence of the typical carriage house.

Prepared by Woodrow W. Wilkins  
Supervising Architect  
National Park Service  
June 29, 1966  
and  
Charles A. Herrington  
Architectural Historian  
National Park Service  
August 4, 1972

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

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These records were prepared as a cooperative project during the summer of 1966 between the Historic American Buildings Survey and various agencies, organizations, and individuals of the City of Mobile. The Historic American Buildings Survey supplied the project supervisor, Woodrow W. Wilkins, and three draughtsmen, Carl J. Rosenberg (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Michael R. Foil (Auburn University), and Lowell K. West (University of Kentucky). One draughtsman, Elbert L. Coleman (Alabama A & M), was provided by the Mobile Housing Board, which agency administers urban renewal. The services of an additional draughtsman, James Eley, specifically designated as an architectural student from Auburn University, were made possible by contributions from numerous local architects and businessmen. The Historic Mobile Preservation Society, in agreement with the History Department of Springhill College, provided a student historian, Linda Carroll. Office space was supplied by the City of Mobile through the City Planning Commission. Roy Thigpen, a local photographer, was contracted to supply the photographs. All local arrangements were made by the Mobile Historic Development Commission, Mrs. Nancy N. Holmes, President. The project was edited during the summer of 1972 by Charles A. Herrington, Architectural Historian, in a cooperative effort between the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Mobile Historic Development Commission.